



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

OPERATION PREDATOR ARRESTS SURPASS 5,000

Northern California accounts for more than 400 arrests in initiative targeting child sex predators

SAN FRANCISCO – More than 400 of the 5,000 child sex offenders arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) as part of an ongoing international initiative known as Operation Predator have occurred in northern California.

Michael J. Garcia, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for ICE, announced today that arrests nationwide in the 20-month long effort have surpassed 5,000. So far there have been 431 Predator-related arrests in northern California. The Bay Area accounted for 224 of those arrests, followed by Fresno (69), Bakersfield (64), San Jose (37), Sacramento (24), Stockton (12), and Redding (1).

Operation Predator is a comprehensive initiative aimed at those who prey on and exploit children, including human traffickers, international sex tourists, Internet pornographers, and foreign national predators whose crimes make them deportable. In northern California, the targets have included a Fresno youth softball coach, the son of a former astronaut, and a Sacramento man who recorded sexually explicit images of himself with his then two-month-old daughter.

“Sexual predators will not go unpunished for their heinous crimes,” said Garcia. “Whether the criminal is a U.S. citizen who thinks they can travel overseas to molest children or a pornographer who trades in images of child sexual abuse, or a foreign national who has lost the privilege to remain in the U.S. because of a crime against a child, ICE will identify, arrest, and, where possible, remove them.”

Operation Predator evolved out of ICE’s mission to find and deport illegal aliens -- particularly those with criminal records, and reflects the agency’s traditional public safety mission. Those arrested fall into four general categories:

Foreign National Child Predators: More than 85 percent of the arrests made as part of Operation Predator have been arrests of foreign national sex offenders whose crimes make them removable from the United States. To date, more than 2,100 of these predators have been deported. Consider this example:

- ❑ ***Man Who Molested a 20-Month-Old Child:*** In December, ICE agents in San Francisco took custody of a 40-year-old Kuwaiti national who was charged by the Antioch Police Department in 2001 with sexually assaulting his six-year-old and 20-month-old step daughters. ICE has placed the man in immigration removal proceedings and is holding him without bond.

International Child Sex Tourists: Working cooperatively with foreign governments through ICE's attaché offices worldwide, ICE agents made the first 12 arrests under the child sex tourism provisions of the PROTECT Act. Consider this case:

- ❑ ***San Francisco Property Manager Arrested Departing for Thailand to Have Sex with Boys:*** ICE agents arrested Walter Schirra, 54, in November as he was about to board a flight to Thailand where he allegedly intended to solicit sex with underage boys. A search of Schirra's luggage revealed photos of shirtless Asian boys, large amounts of candy, as well as prescription drugs and other aids designed to enhance sexual pleasure. Schirra is the first person in the Bay Area to be charged under the provisions of the PROTECT Act, which substantially strengthened U.S. laws against child sex tourism by modifying the burden of proof requirements for federal prosecutors to bring charges. In January, Schirra was charged in a superseding indictment with possession and receiving child pornography. He is slated to go to trial March 23.

Human Smuggling & Trafficking of Children: The criminal networks engaged in human smuggling and trafficking have become more violent and more profit-driven than ever before. At the same time, some of their victims are getting younger and younger.

- ❑ ***Orange County Couple Charged for Holding Egyptian Girl as Domestic Slave:*** Eid Youssef Ibrahim, 44, and Amal Ahmed Ewis-abd Motelib, 41, are under indictment in Los Angeles on involuntary servitude charges for allegedly enslaving a 12-year-old girl in the garage of their Irvine home for two years and forcing her to work as a domestic servant for their family. The couple, who were married at the time of the offense, are accused of conspiring to hold the victim in involuntary servitude and obtain her services by force and coercion.

Internet Child Pornography: Drawing on ICE's cyber crime investigative expertise, ICE is tackling the crimes that cross the nation's virtual borders. Moreover, through the National Child Victim Identification System, more than 1,600 pornographic images containing child pornography have been authenticated.

- ❑ ***Former Youth Softball Coach Arrested for Distributing Child Pornography over the Internet:*** ICE agents arrested Mark McGarry, 44, at his home in January after the Fresno County Sheriff's Department received a tip from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. During a search of McGarry's Fresno home, ICE agents found hundreds of images of child pornography, including prints hidden in a mattress. On McGarry's desktop computer, the agents discovered more than 600 explicit images, including depictions of infants being sexually abused by adult men. McGarry faces a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison if convicted of the federal charges lodged against him.

Additional information about Operation Predator is available on the Web at www.ice.gov. ICE encourages the reporting of suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free hotline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE. This hotline is staffed around the clock by investigators.

Suspected child sexual exploitation or missing children may be reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, an Operation Predator partner, at 1-800-843-5678 or <http://www.cybertipline.com>.

Editor's Note: B-roll, including video of arrests, an interview with Assistant Secretary Garcia, and graphics will be available via satellite at 12:00 noon PST. The coordinates for the video feed are: GALAXY 3/C-Band Transponder 6, Vertical: 95° West, Downlink frequency: 3820 Mhz.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.